



File Code: 1950

Date: February 17, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

The Record of Decision and the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Bozeman Municipal Watershed Project are enclosed. I included a summary of the SFEIS and Record of Decision along with a CD containing full electronic copies of the SFEIS and ROD. If you would like paper copies of the SFEIS or Record of Decision please call my office.

The Bozeman Municipal Watershed Fuels Reduction Project is in the northern Gallatin Mountain Range near the city of Bozeman, Montana. The area encompasses approximately the lower one third of the Bozeman Creek and Hyalite Creek drainages beginning just to the north of the Moser Creek Road in the Hyalite drainage. The northern part of Hyalite is also drained by Hodgeman and Leverich Creeks. A portion of the Gallatin Fringe Inventoried Roadless Area is included on the eastern side of the project area. The entire project area is considered wildland urban interface (WUI) with many adjacent private homes, and sub-divisions within one-half mile of the Forest boundary. The project area provides much of the municipal water supply for the city of Bozeman. The city water treatment plant is located just outside the National Forest boundary on Bozeman Creek. Two water diversion dams that channel water to the treatment plant, one each on Bozeman and Hyalite Creeks, are approximately one half mile inside the Forest boundary adjacent to the Hyalite and Bozeman Creek Roads.

With this project, the Gallatin National Forest intends to create vegetation and fuel conditions that will reduce the risk of excess sediment and ash resulting from a wildfire event from reaching the municipal water treatment plant. Upon review of the Final EIS and Supplemental Final EIS, Project File, public comments and Forest Service responses for the project, I have selected Alternative 6 with minor changes that will further minimize potential impact to water quality. The details of the decision are in the attached documents. This alternative was developed to respond to changed economic conditions between the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and FEIS, and to respond to public comments on the DEIS. The decision also reflects consideration of court decisions since March 2010 and our response to issues raised during the administrative appeal process in the spring of 2010, which resulted in a withdrawal of the decision I signed last year.

The SFEIS is limited to a compilation of supplemental analysis for Elk and Other Big Game Species, Fisheries, Soils, and Water Quality, with updates to the Sensitive Plant analysis and consideration of cumulative effects from reasonably foreseeable activities in the vicinity of Bozeman Creek. The supplemental analysis discloses reduced impacts to these resources compared to the analysis in the FEIS. The additional data and analysis affirms conclusions and alternative development previously disclosed in the FEIS.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215 (June 2003). A written appeal, including attachments, must be submitted to the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer (36 CFR 215.8) within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle, Bozeman, Montana. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the availability of Record of Decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.15. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.



Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59807

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

In electronic appeals, the subject line must contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF). If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Written appeals must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service, e-mailed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the appeal period. Hand delivered appeals must be time and date imprinted at the Responsible Official's office by the close of business on the last day of the comment period. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

Individuals and organizations that submitted written or oral comments during the 45-day comment period (36 CFR 215.6) for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement may file an appeal. Comments received from an authorized representative(s) of an organization are considered those of the organization only; individual members of that organization do not meet appeal eligibility requirements solely on the basis of membership in an organization; the member(s) must submit comments as an individual.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.9, if no appeal is received, implementation of this project may begin on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of the appeal disposition.

Additional copies of the Supplemental Final EIS and Record of Decision are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin> on the Projects and Plans page. To request a paper copy, contact Teri Seth by phone at (406) 522-2520, or by letter to Attn: Teri Seth, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon St. Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718. Additional information is available from Project Leader, Teri Seth or District Ranger, Lisa Stoeffler at the Bozeman Ranger District.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marna Daley (for)
MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor

cc: Steve Christiansen